

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 02277 121605Z

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SUBJ: LLERAS VS. TURBAY: THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS

REF: A. BOGOTA A-122, JUNE 20, 74; B. LLERAS MEMCON DEC 10, 74

PARA 7

1. SUMMARY, PROVOKED BY AN EDITORIAL IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF CARLOS LLERAS' NUEVA FRONTERA TITLED "THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY (LIBERAL) AND ITS FUTURE UNITY" A PHILOSOPHIC AND PERSONALISTIC PUBLIC DISPUTE HAS BROKEN OUT BETWEEN FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO AND SENATE PRESIDENT, PRESIDENTIAL-DESIGNATE (DESIGNADO) AND AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO THE US JULIO CESAR TURBAY

AYALA, WHICH PROBABLY REPRESENTS THE OPENING ROUND IN THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS EDITORIAL AND SUBSEQUENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, LLERAS CALLED FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO SEPARATE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO END WHAT HE TERMED A SYSTEM OF "POLITICAL CLIENTS" (POLITICO CLIENTELISMO). LLERAS ARGUED THAT SINCE LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN ARE AUTOMATICALLY DELEGATES TO THE PARTY'S NOMINATING CONVENTION, THEY SHOULD BE ELECTED CLOSER (PRESUMABLY BEGINNING IN 1976) TO THE DATE OF

THE CONVENTION (PROBABLY SOMETIME IN THE SUMMER OF 1977). HE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 02277 121605Z

ALSO URGED THE LIBERAL PARTY TO INSTITUTE STATUTES HE DRAFTED

IN 1963 WHICH WOULD GIVE THE VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE PARTY MANAGEMENT THUS BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN PARTY DECISIONS.

3. LLERAS ACCUSED TURBAY OF THROWING HIS SUPPORT BEHIND LOPEZ (AGAINST LLERAS) IN THE 1973 CONVENTION IN EXCHANGE FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LIBERAL PARTY DIRECTORATE (DNL) WHICH LLERAS ALLEGES TURBAY USED TO MOUNT PARTY MACHINE BOTH IN THE PARTY AND IN THE CONGRESS TO ENSURE HIS NOMINATION IN 1978. ACCORDING TO EL TIEMPO, IN A PUBLIC GATHERING MARCH 7, LLERAS REPEATED AS HE HAS SO OFTEN IN THE LAST YEAR THAT HE WILL NOT BE A CANDIDATE IN 1978, AND CHALLENGED TURBAY TO OPEN THE PARTY TO COMPETITION. HE WARNED THAT "IF THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES (FOR A MORE DEMOCRATIC PARTY) PROVIDED BY THE CONGRESS, THEN ABSOLUTELY THERE WILL BE A DIVISION IN THE PARTY WHICH I WILL BE THE FIRST TO SUPPORT."

4. RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE, TURBAY IN A SEPARATE PUBLIC GATHERING MAR 7 IMPLIED THAT WHILE HE ENGAGED IN POLITICS IN AN INTELLECTUAL MANNER, LLERAS WAS EMOTIONAL ADDING "I AM USED TO THESE TEMPERAMENTAL CHANGES OF LLERAS...WHICH HAVE OFTEN BEEN DIRECTED AT ME." HE ALSO ACCUSED LLERAS OF A DOUBLE STANDARD, CRITICIZING NOW ALL THE THINGS HE FAVORED WHEN HE WAS THE DOMINANT INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY. HE ASKED, "IF IN 35 YEARS THE EX-PRESIDENT HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THE PARTY OVER IN HIS OWN IMAGE, HOW MANY MORE YEARS WOULD HE NEED?" TURBAY CHALLENGED LLERAS TO OFFER LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE OFF-YEAR ELECTIONS IN 1976 FOR DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLYMEN AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILMEN, IN ORDER TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH STRENGTH HE HAS WITH THE LIBERAL ELECTORATE. OTHERWISE, TURBAY SAID, LLERAS SHOULD USE HIS ENERGY AND PRESTIGE TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT LOPEZ.

5. IN A LETTER TO EL TIEMPO MARCH 11, LLERAS ATTACKED THAT NEWSPAPER'S REPORTER FOR NOT IDENTIFYING HIMSELF TO LLERAS DURING THE MARCH 7 GATHERING AND FOR WRITING THINGS, "SOME OF WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN INVENTED" WHICH LLERAS THOUGHT WERE BEING SAID PRIVATELY AMONG FRIENDS. OTHER PRESS REPORTS INDICATED THAT LLERAS AND TURBAY WERE CANCELING THEIR POLEMICS. EMB SOURCES AMONG LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, STATED THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 02277 121605Z

DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO COMBATANTS IS SERIOUS AND PROBABLY IRREVERSIBLE.

6. COMMENT: THE LLERAS-TURBAY EXCHANGE MAY MARK THE START OF THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. WHILE THAT ELECTION IS A LONG WAY OFF, IT HAS NEVER BEEN TOO EARLY IN COLOMBIAN POLITICS TO CAMPAIGN. LLERAS' THREAT TO DIVIDE THE PARTY IS NOT TO BE TAKEN

LIGHTLY. HIS REMARKS INDICATE THAT HE WILL BE HARD PUT EVER TO FORGIVE TURBAY FOR WHAT HE CONSIDERS A BETRAYAL DURING THE 1973 CONVENTION. IN JUNE 1974 (SEE REF A) CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS SPECULATED THAT AS THE PROBLEMS OF THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT MOUNTED, BICKERING AMONG LIBERALS WOULD SPREAD, CREATING THE POSSIBILITY OF A LLERISTA-PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE COALITION FOR THE 1978 ELECTIONS. LLERAS MAY HAVE OPENED THE DOOR. THE TIMING OF THE PUBLIC DISPUTE ON THE EVE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS IS PROBABLY NOT TOO IMPORTANT, ALTHOUGH LLERAS MAY HAVE FELT OBLIGED TO RAISE THE ISSUE PRIOR TO THE DEPARTURE OF TURBAY FOR THE US, PROBABLY SOMETIME IN APRIL. ACTUALLY, LLERAS, IN ONE OF THE EARLY ISSUES OF NUEVA FRONTERA LAST OCTOBER, HAD RAISED THE SAME CHARGES AGAINST TURBAY, BUT AT THAT TIME THEY FELL FLAT.

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